

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-33 (*Canceled*):

34 (*Currently Amended*): A rinsing method comprising:

a first step for accommodating an article, to be rinsed, into a second container which is disposed inside a first container;

a second step for introducing an oxygen gas or an ozone gas into the second container;

a third step for irradiating the article for rinsing with ultraviolet rays from a light source disposed inside the first container but outside the second container, wherein an internal pressure in the second container is maintained higher than in the first container while the article is being irradiated by the ultraviolet rays;

a fourth step for introducing a nitrogen gas into the second container and discharging the oxygen gas or the ozone gas in the second container to the first container, to exchange an ambience of the second container, where the discharged oxygen gas or the ozone gas in the first container is substantially exhausted to an outside environment so that ~~[[the]]~~ a nitrogen ~~containing~~ ambience is produced in each of the first and second containers in which the light source and the article are placed, respectively; and

a fifth step for unloading the article from the ~~first and second containers~~ container to the outside environment via the first container, after leaving the article in the nitrogen ambience .

35 (*Previously Presented*): A rinsing method according to claim 34, wherein the second container has a clearance through the first container, wherein the second container is maintained at an ambience different from that of the first container and is kept at an internal pressure higher than that of the first container in the second step, and wherein the oxygen gas or ozone gas in the second container is discharged into the first container through the clearance at the fourth step.

36 (*Previously Presented*): A rinsing method according to claim 34, wherein the article is a light transmission type optical element.

37 (*Previously Presented*): A rinsing method according to claim 34, wherein the article is made of one of quartz and fluorite, and wherein the article is an optical element adapted to be used with a wavelength region of 200 nm or shorter.

38 (*Previously Presented*): An exposure apparatus including an optical lens having been rinsed in accordance with the rinsing method as recited in claim 34.